

July 10 2020

# Noticias y Notas

News and notes from the Second Judicial District Court

## Mock trial tests court's plan for resuming jury trials

Judges became jurors, a human resources administrator was the star witness, a deputy court executive officer morphed into a prosecuting attorney and the chief legal counsel suddenly became a corrections officer.

This was not the annual Second Judicial District Court Halloween celebration. It was a mock trial to test protocols for resuming jury trials while we continue to fight the COVID-19 pandemic. The New Mexico Supreme Court suspended jury trials in March to help control the spread of COVID-19. All other court hearings have continued, although the manner in which they are conducted changed to comply with COVID-safe practices.



**Senior HR Administrator Denise Patrick, far right, was the star witness in the mock trial that tested the court's plan for conducting jury trials amid COVID-19 restrictions. Deputy CEO Monica Rodriguez, center, was a prosecuting attorney.**

In the Second Judicial District Court, that has largely meant conducting hearings via video conference, with only the judge a bailiff and a court reporter or court monitor in the courtroom. Recognizing that the audio-visual format would not be sufficient for conducting jury trials, the Supreme Court asked each court across the state to develop plans for allowing all parties to be present in the courtroom during a trial while minimizing the potential spread of COVID-19.

The Supreme Court reviewed and approved those plans individually, resulting in a staggered start for jury trials to resume safely across the state. With our plan approved by the Supreme Court, the Second Judicial District Court should resume jury trials next week.

Things definitely will look different than they did back in March, but the mock trial showed the court has a solid plan for ensuring that citizens continue to have their constitutional right to a jury trial even as we continue to battle a pandemic.



## Shout outs



**This is the space where we sound the horn for outstanding performances.**

This week's shout out goes to the generous folks who participated in this week's **Blood Drive**.

All of the slots were filled. Those who participated got an extra bonus of COVID antibody testing. Most of all, they have the knowledge that they are helping save lives. That deserves a **Well**

**Done!** We also want to recognize **Darrell Evans** from Purchasing, who continues to coordinate these life-saving drives.

**We need more news and notes. Share your stories by contacting us at:**  
[albdxsh@nmcourt.gov](mailto:albdxsh@nmcourt.gov)

## Socially distant jury

The SJDC plan for jury trials calls for placing jurors in assigned seats in both the jury box and the courtroom gallery to maintain at least six-foot spacing. That means public seating in trials will be limited. The IT staff is setting up screens in other courthouse rooms from which members of the public can view trials, with proper social distancing. And, of course, courtrooms will be cleaned between every hearing in which different parties appear in person.



Special recognition is in order for everyone who participated in the mock trial. We also have to congratulate **Joy Willis, Megan Kalm, and Blane Wamsley** for a stellar job in organizing a very successful mock trial.



## Checking temperatures

At left is Delilah Salaz from Domestic Relations. She is one of the roughly 100 SJDC employees who have volunteered to conduct COVID-19 screenings at court entrances. The screening involves asking each individual a series of questions about their possible exposure to the virus as well as checking their temperature.

This is a vital function for keeping the courts open, as well as keeping us all safe. We thank you all, and we hope to find ways of acknowledging more of you in future issues.

## Identify the graduate

Last week's holiday caused a two-week delay in identifying our latest graduate. However, Gina Cammarota from the Domestic Violence Division needed almost no time to identify the man playing the guitar as Judge William Parnall. Gina, [Janet Van Why](#) in HR has a prize for you. This week's graduate photo is [posted here](#). Good luck, everyone.

